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AUTHOR Bell, Marie; And Others
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ABSTRACT

This booklet contains a collection of three symposium papers dealing with current trends and issues in New Zealand early childhood education: (1) "Implications for Teacher Training of New Trends in Pre-School Education", (2) "Professionalism in Early Childhood Education: Some Trends", and (3) "Innovation in Pre-School Programmes." The first paper suggests some implications for training the early childhood educator, based on an examination of the aims of preschool education as outlined in a Department of Education report. The second paper traces the trend toward professionalism in New Zealand early childhood education, particularly with regard to length of training, widening range of responsibility, and willingness to be evaluated. The third paper outlines some of the pressures for innovation in New Zealand preschool programs, discusses some of the barriers preventing innovation, and suggests the kinds of innovation that might prove acceptable to those working in the field of early childhood education in New Zealand. (CS)

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TRENDS AND ISSUES IN EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

Marie Bell

Peter E Dinniss

Geraldine McDonald

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NEW ZEALAND COUNCIL FOR EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH

Education House, 178 - 182 Willis Street, Wellington 1.

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IMPLICATIONS FOR TEACHER TRAINING OF NEW TRENDS IN PRE-SCHOOL EDUCATION

Marie Bell

Throughout the world, research findings emphasize the importance of the early years of life, and educators and social reformers are looking critically at educational provision for early childhood. The New Zealand government has indicated that it intends to improve pre-school facilities so that all may eventually choose the type they want. This means that there must be expansion of services and improvement of training.

The Educational Development Conference included pre-school education in its deliberations and it can be assumed that the revised aims for New Zealand education that resulted from the conference encompass the area of early childhood.

> "Education involves those activities which extend the individual's ability to learn, relate, choose, create, communicate, challenge, and respond to challenge so that he may live with purpose in the community of today and tomorrow and achieve satisfaction in the process". 1

The Hill Report offers the following general aims for pre-school education.

> "It is not a case of usurping the function of the parents. It is a matter of providing a service which is an extension of the home, which involves the parents and which supports them in providing the conditions which promote

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1. Educational Development Conference (1974). Report of the Working Party on Aims and Objectives p.11. (My emphasis.)

> growth in breadth as well as development in depth. The programme in an effective pre-school gives the child the opportunity to broaden his social contact with other children and adults. He is provided with a rich environment for living, thinking and learning. He finds himself in situations which call upon him to expand his language as a means of expression and communication. The activities in which he is encouraged help promote and maintain his health and physical development. His understanding of the environment is broadened by a programme designed to have him find interest in the world about him through elementary experiences in social studies and science which lead him to observe, to question, to recognise, to explain and to seek further knowledge. And finally he lays the foundations of the behaviour patterns which will help him to continue with his further education. He learns how to learn". 2

The pre-school institution which receives most financial support, particularly in its training programmes, is the kindergarten. At present trainees are mainly young girls of 17 years or more who have had four or five years of secondary education and have reached Sixth Form Certificate or University Entrance standard. Their training is for two years, undertaken mainly in small training centres at Auckland, Wellington, Christchurch and Dunedin, although there are three pre-school units attached to primary teachers college at North Shore, Hamilton, and Palmerston North. Improvements in student allowances to bring them to parity with primary students and current consideration of a three-year course suggest that the service is gradually being up-graded. To attain the goals outlined above, teachers would need training

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2. Department of Education (1971).
Report of the Committee of Inquiry into Pre-school Education. Wellington, p.27.
(My emphasis.)

of a very high order and this would aim to develop the qualities of educator (of children and adults), social worker, and community leader.

I will now examine the implications for training of the aims outlined above.

THE INVOLVEMENT OF PARENTS

It must be assumed that early childhood teachers will be able to involve parents of all types in their work. This is a task which has not been undertaken in any other part of the school system. The only educational institution which has done this is the play-centre movement in which parents support, guide and enlighten each other. If kindergarten teachers are to become involved in this difficult and sensitive task a great deal of thought must be put into this part of the training. Selection, length of training and methods will have to be carefully re-assessed. Is it realistic to expect girls straight from school, after two years of training, to be very successful in involving parents? Should we be trying to train more mature people? Why only women?

The concept "family", meaning two parents, does not apply to all children in pre-schools and in future more men may share or undertake the daily care of young children. Some children might be helped by relating to men in kindergartens and this could happen if teaching in kindergarten became acceptable to men.

Family support involves not only the provision of programmes for children but also the provision of a community group where lonely mothers may find friendship and a sense of worth. A mature,

sensitive pre-school teacher will understand the need to make parents feel valuable. Institutions which denigrate parents and make them feel that experts can cope better with their children in all but a very limited area, may be encouraging parents to be irresponsible, and adding to the "generation gap". Through all the Educational Development Conference reports runs the note that family and community should be involved in schooling. The pre-school is the first opportunity for such involvement. A new concept has to be "sold" to parents; not "we take over now" and "you help us to do our job" but "together we contribute something to this child". This may be relatively simple when teachers and parents have a similar background of experience, but much more difficult where basic methods of communication diverge through differences of race, colour, creed, language, socio-economic background and educational experience. Only by engaging in real dialogue with parents can teachers assess the value of a parent's contribution. Much of the training for this kind of work will have to involve working in the community with groups of all types. As the Educational Development Conference Report of the Working Party on Aims and Objectives says "learning to live and work in community is a lifelong process in which every person is to some extent both teacher and learner". Trainees would have to enter the field of teaching with the feeling that they could begin to give those with whom they related a feeling of "confidence, competence and personal worth".

OPPORTUNITY TO BROADEN SOCIAL EXPERIENCE WITH OTHER CHILDREN AND ADULTS

Until now the schools have subordinated social experience to that of instruction in academic disciplines. Students entering training have, in the main, had the majority of their social experience with peer or small family groups. Their strengths in relating to people are

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in these areas and many lack the ability to relate warmly and creatively to a variety of people. They need to be made aware of leadership techniques which will involve all group members in social development. The training curriculum should include study of group dynamics as well as practical work in groups. There is also a need for the development of self-awareness so that the learner can explore and share human feelings by understanding his own. This is a difficult and often impossible task for many an eighteen-year-old fresh from a sheltered home and school environment. It can only be begun during training, and this is an area in which frequent in-service training is essential.

THE CHILD IS PROVIDED WITH A RICH ENVIRONMENT FOR LIVING, THINKING AND LEARNING

Every teacher should understand and keep up with changing knowledge about the way young children learn and develop and grow. A start can be made on a real understanding of the sensori-motor and pre-operational stages of intellectual development by observing and interacting with young children and comparing and contrasting child and adult thought processes. I think students should develop understanding of the need for sense experience as a basis for concept development and that a child needs to build up a store of practical experiences for later use in abstract thinking. There is a need to live richly at each stage and be provided with the scope and opportunity to progress. School teachers and parents may often urge early childhood teachers to take short-cuts. Information about, and explanation of, the methods used should be part of an early childhood education programme.

Those in early childhood education may have to defend the value of play as a vehicle for stimulating abstract thinking, imagination, planning, memory, identity, group interaction, reasoning and language. A danger of the move towards integration into the school system could be that a more structured and formalised type of teaching, perhaps advantageous in the short term but harmful to later learning, could be applied to children under the age of five. Already many children over five experience, in large groups, "teaching" which is abstract and incomprehensible to them. It is through active relationships with people, through being known, felt and understood as a person, that the child's basic curiosity and interest in the world begin to develop. Most students find this hard to comprehend because it is so different from the methods of the secondary school from which they have recently come, and in which they have apparently been successful.

Students in training need to build up their own store of skills and knowledge but they should also be able to draw on resources in the community. It is part of the pre-school teacher's job to develop enthusiasms and to recognise and foster incipient strengths in children and parents. Students need to explore and experience all the media they use with children and evaluate their own development and reactions. The structure of the training programme should be that of a pre-school. Then we might reach the ideal. The medium would be the message!

The **teacher** is the designer and determiner of what goes on, no matter what she teaches. At the pre-school level the child is most likely to progress if teachers are adding something to the basis laid by the most important and influential teachers, the parents. They can do this only if they have some knowledge of

each child not just at the pre-school, but also at home. Ideally, tthen, a pre-school teacher would make efforts to find out about the child's background. Home-visiting and community participation make it easier for a teacher to understand the children in her care and such activities should be an important part of training. A knowledge of child development and the importance of parental influences is useless out of context. The goals, values and stresses of parents must be understood before meaningful provision for children can be developed. Community and family change has to be accepted as normal, the reasons appreciated, and the role of the educational institution evaluated against this background. Studies of sociology and anthropology provide a very useful frame of reference for this.

The training of students should also enable them to accept change. How can this be incorporated into training programmes? One way may be to help students "to learn, unlearn and relearn". There is much change within the area of child development. Research continually provides new perspectives on subjects of concern such as discipline, sex education, moral development and family life. Both planners and teachers must be prepared to be flexible and tolerant when presenting these topics.

EXPANSION OF LANGUAGE AS A MEANS OF EXPRESSION AND COMMUNICATION

Language as the root of success in school has received much attention and has become an important rationale for the extension of early childhood education for the underprivileged.

The implications of this for teacher training are complex. A knowledge of language development, very necessary for early childhood teachers, can probably be most effectively built up by study plus working experience with many different kinds of children and

adults. The development and enrichment of the students' own language is also important both to provide them with awareness of the process and to ensure that children and parents have a suitable model. A knowledge of at least some of the customs and vocabulary of minority cultures might also be an advantage. Accordingly, the opportunity to study anthropology as a basis for understanding the background of children of another culture should be available.

Students should also be given the opportunity to acquire at least a working vocabulary with which to communicate with parents and children who may speak a language other than English.

The Head Start programmes may offer some guidance to our efforts to help children with their language development. When the organizers tried to develop speech with young children, who were retarded because of the wretched conditions of their early lives, they found it necessary to call on, as helpers, professionals from other fields, such as social workers, psychologists, teachers of older children, as well as teen-age volunteers, parents and others. In these circumstances a key function of the pre-school teacher becomes the co-ordinating of the efforts of all of these different types of helpers.

HELP PROMOTE AND MAINTAIN HEALTH AND PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT

If teachers are to implement this aim, they need to appreciate good mental and physical health and be healthy themselves. Many students need help and encouragement to undertake any kind of physical exertion and a variety of activities has to be offered. Energy and vitality are important attributes in a pre-school teacher.

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How can trainers of pre-school teachers change life patterns? Most student teachers are entering adulthood and facing new challenges in their emotional life. These often affect their physical health. Many of them have lacked caring adult support in their own emotional growth and, although to some degree the study of children's emotional needs can be helpful, it may also be unsettling to the student. The more mature students, who have had their own children, are better able to cope. Trainers may have some success in persuading students that children need to express their strong feelings as well as learn how to control them, but the use of techniques of redirecting children into creative activities, the ability to discuss children's feelings with them and the capacity to understand children's behaviour (all of which are essential to the skilled pre-school teacher) are difficult to develop in students unless they have experienced such techniques in their own upbringing. No doubt the procedures of sensitivity training would help, but students cannot be forced into this. Such training could be helpful to senior pre-school officers and perhaps be made available at in-service courses. Small group discussions of disciplinary situations, role-playing, use of creative media by students and good personal relationships with tutors can all contribute to this kind of understanding.

The last aim that I will discuss in regard to teacher training is that teachers should be involved in those activities which will help children so that "they may live with purpose in the community of today and tomorrow". No doubt pre-school education will expand at some stage to involve all the years of early childhood and those children who need substitute family care. Students must never leave their training colleges with the idea that theirs is the only way. They must be encouraged to keep up with new trends by reading, attending courses and by being involved in other educational and community groups.

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It is to be hoped that they will align themselves with causes which concern the well-being of young children. This will mean having the confidence, courage and expertise to take a stand in the community by defending what they believe in. Training can play an important part in developing these qualities if the staff are prepared to have their values and ideals challenged and if they provide opportunities for dialogue. Such exercises may not always be comfortable but at least prevent complacency.

The future will bring a greater emphasis on teaching which is creative. Such teaching may diverge from accepted patterns. The starting-point of creative teaching can only be the teacher who can recognise creativity, and only teacher education which fosters and encourages creativity can do this. The two fundamental questions to which any teacher must address himself are, to paraphrase the words of Martin Buber, "Who am I? What do I bring? Who are you? Do I know something that concerns you? What can I bring you?" Well educated teachers of parents and children may have the knowledge that can prevent mental ill health. crime, and poverty of life. Better training might enable them to use this knowledge.

PROFESSIONALISM IN EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION: SOME TRENDS

Peter E Dinniss

At the outset it seems proper to offer some definition of the term "professional". There has been much debate over the term together with discussion as to whether or not teaching is a profession.[1] Lieberman (1956) has stated that the characteristics of a profession are:

(a) the providing of a unique and essential social service; and

(b) the emphasizing of intellectual techniques in performing the service.

Those within a profession:

(i) have a long period of training (I would add refresher training),

(ii) exercise a broad range of autonomy and responsibility,

(iii) place emphasis on the service provided rather than economic gain,

(iv) constitute a self-governing organization of practitioners,

(v) maintain a code of ethics.

I would like to discuss early childhood education on the basis of this definition and I shall raise one or two points not covered by it.

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1 Spodek (1972) comments that while education is a doubtful contender for professional status it does have some of the requirements and can therefore be regarded as moving towards full recognition. Teachers do offer a unique and essential service, emphasize intellectual techniques and do have long periods of training. However, autonomy and responsibility are present only to some degree. Teachers generally are not self-governing, nor do they maintain a code of ethics.

New Zealand has two main forms of early childhood education, the kindergarten and the playcentre. There are also other forms, but these, for the moment anyway, are too small in number to warrant special consideration, except for the comment that the child care centre may well become a third source of early education for a considerable number of children. There may be dangers in making generalisations about early childhood education which do not acknowledge the differences which exist between kindergartens and playcentres with regard to training of teachers, funding, control, and the differences in the relative position held by parents.

LENGTH OF TRAINING

It is somewhat difficult to say exactly what constitutes a "long period" of training. The professions of medicine and law have between 5-9 years of training including a practicum - so where one should draw the line is not clear. There is also the vexed question of whether the training has to be full-time and to what extent "intellectual techniques" are, or should be, applied in early childhood education.

The training period for kindergarten teachers is currently two years, and will become three years if the Hill report (Department of Education 1971) recommendation 7.2 is put into effect. For playcentre supervisors the length of training is considered to include the experience of rearing one's own children. To this are added specific requirements which involve a year's part-time training (at the minimum) followed by refresher courses in order to maintain the licence to supervise.

Early childhood educators have also shown a recent trend towards training beyond the first or basic qualification. In this connection one can mention Massey University's early childhood education course conducted for extra-mural students, the New Zealand

Playcentre Diploma, and university degree work (not necessarily concerned with pre-school matters). All these factors support the first characteristic of professionalism, the long period of required training.

Historically there have been periods of confusion and even some ambivalence towards, the education of pre-school children. It has been given varying interpretations such as "teaching", "socialisation", "all-round development", "security" and so forth. Some clarity seems to be emerging and if this continues it will become possible to train, or should one say educate, teachers for a particular function. This move in itself should allow for increased professionalism. It should also contribute to lengthier courses of training because the clarification of aims and objectives in education is usually accompanied by an elaboration of methods of achieving these aims and objectives.

BROADENING THE RANGE OF RESPONSIBILITY

One can suggest that the range of responsibility in early childhood education has been broadened by including the function of parent education. This is particularly the case with playcentre groups. To enable this to be done training has been required both from within the movement and from other agencies. The ability to run effective parent education either by way of group discussions, by workshops, or by working alongside parents within playcentre sessions is not lightly or easily developed.

Ashby's (1972) discussion of parent education is relevant and interesting on such issues. He concludes by stating:

> "...that although the primary educational function of the pre-school is directed towards the child, an almost equally important function is directed toward the community and in particular, the parents ...the teachers' concern is not solely the development of programmes for young children, but also the development of educational programmes for parents and others".

Ashby goes on to acknowledge the centrality of parent education for the New Zealand playcentre. Grotberg's chapter in the NSSE Year Book (1972) contains some pertinent comments on parent involvement, on training teachers and on educating children. She unfortunately does not discuss the ways in which teachers can work with parents or the methods by which parents can be educated to become more effective parent educators. Spodek (1972) in the same publication, concludes his section on parent workers with this statement:

> "The introduction of a parent educator could add immeasurably to an early childhood programme. The role of parent educator would be a new one in most schools".

Thus there seems to be support for the notion that pre-school educators are indeed increasing their professionalism in that the width of service and responsibility has been increased.

THE MOVE TOWARDS EVALUATION

There has been a move in training and practice towards a more rigorously expressed set of aims and objectives and this has had the effect of allowing pre-school practices to be evaluated. There has, however, been resistance to this by some groups. It mainly

takes the form of questioning that a global concept such as "all-round development", or "emotional well-being" can be measured. The willingness of various teachers to be examined in their practices by students taking the Massey certificate is an example of a trend towards the acceptance of evaluation, and hence towards professionalism. There is undoubtedly room for further development in this direction. It may be hard, however, to develop a professional approach to pre-school education if objectives continue to be couched in vague and general terms.

I would like to suggest that current statements regarding the aims and objectives of pre-school education in New Zealand lack the kind of precision which one needs to guide a professional enterprise. It is more common to read of "provision", "administration", "co-operation", and such like than to read of clear educational aims and objectives. 2

For an example of precision in objectives I would recommend a book by Vance (1973) which should be on the shelves of all training institutions. While this may be too structured in view of current attitudes it contains much which requires careful consideration.

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2 "For example, a main objective of pre-school education is to work with parents in complementing and reinforcing experiences that children have at home - experiences that, it is now recognised, are basic to full physical, emotional, social and intellectual development of children" (Department of Education 1973), and as the recent report of the Committee of Inquiry into Pre-school Education (1971) puts it: "Through play the child explores, discovers, tries, proves and assimilates. Through play he expresses feelings, experiments with social relationships, develops skills, and acquires a wider use of language".

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IS PRE-SCHOOL EDUCATION ESSENTIAL AND UNIQUE?

Historically, health and welfare aims have often overshadowed the educational function of early childhood education. However, when early childhood education is just what it says it is, that is, "education", then it can probably be regarded as essential. However, I am rather uncertain about this! We must not confuse "essential" with "compulsory". These terms are clearly different. And a further word of caution. Until "essentiality" is proven, it is dangerous to oversell the commodity. "Pre-schools for all children" may not be a justifiable claim. We also need to determine just what "essential" implies; essential for whom, and why?

DIVERSITY

There is one further point which is important but which lies outside this paper's definition of "professional". This concerns the consumer's or client's opportunity to select for himself the professional from whom he requires service. As early childhood education is a voluntary contract between parent and pre-school centre there should be opportunity for choice. The fact that the two major forms of early childhood education co-exist does allow some choice. It was therefore interesting that the Hill Report appears to support the continuation of diversity of offering. However, the same report does not appear to give the same weight to diversity of training. There seems to be some assumption that diversity of training may lead to widely differing standards which, of course, need not be so.

As the functions of early childhood education in New Zealand become more clearly stated and as these functions appear to involve at least two clearly different groups - children and parents - then the time may well be opportune for the institution

of training which permits greater recognition of the difference between these groups. At the moment, training for kindergarten work appears mainly child-centred while that for playcentre work contains, at some levels, courses of relevance to parent education. One may query whether there is now a need for greater training opportunities for parent educators within early childhood education and whether it is necessary that the parent educator be necessarily a longer-trained teacher of children. Perhaps the dichotomy is not so real as it seems. My point is that the person successful in working with adults is not necessarily the person who is successful in working with children. Ideally, however, the person with the capacities to work with adults will be able to work successfully with children too. Perhaps adequate selection and training will, in the future, allow for this development. If the trend towards professionalism is to continue then there may well be a need to recognise the different requirements of these two roles, which up until recently at least, have not been clearly distinguished.

CONCLUSION

The criterion of self-government is undoubtedly not met by New Zealand teachers in general. Nor is there any maintained code of ethics which is sufficiently rigorous to be worthy of implementation. However, the time may be approaching when there is a need for some form of national body to which all pre-school educators can belong. Perhaps the playcentre movement, may need to standardize, to some degree anyway, its courses of training before a national group could be instituted. If such a national body was formed it could help towards presenting authoritative statements on aims and objectives, and carry out other activities customarily associated with a body representing a national group of professional people.

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This paper is brief, somewhat sketchy and no doubt overlooks some aspects of the problem. It does attempt to show the trend towards professionalism in early childhood education in New Zealand particularly with regard to length of training, widening range of responsibility, and willingness to be evaluated.

Perhaps an important criterion, not included in Lieberman's definition, has to do with the spirit and manner in which a service is offered. In what ways does early childhood education provide careers, and in what way does it carry with it an orientation of "service"? Is there a career structure in early childhood education? Finally, in what way does the part-time nature of some of the activities and training preclude the work from a greater professional orientation?

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INNOVATION IN PRE-SCHOOL PROGRAMMES

Geraldine McDonald

> "In the current climate for change, the pressure on educational planners to innovate is often irresistible and the pace of change is such that there is often too little time to clarify objectives and assess the change's impact".1

What I want to do in this paper is to set out some of the pressures for innovation in the programmes for children in pre-school centres in New Zealand, to discuss some of the barriers to innovation, and, finally, to suggest the kinds of innovation that might prove acceptable to those working in the field of early childhood education. I am not concerned with whether or not innovation should occur in pre-school programmes, but with the processes by which it may come about.

The last major shift in pre-school programmes probably occurred in the 1950s when both playcentres and kindergartens became increasingly firm in their commitment to free play non-directive programmes. This shift is now about one generation away and anything as long established as that loses its sense of novelty. People may feel, in the words of Labour's campaign slogan, that "It's time for a change".

CURRENT PRESSURES TOWARDS INNOVATION

(a) The "High Purpose" motive

Those in pre-school education have always thought their work significant but I seriously doubt that they would, of their own account, have pressed extravagant claims for the importance of their own sector in

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1 In foreword by Vernon S. Ready to A.J.C. King, Innovative Secondary Schools. The Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, 1972.

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relation to other sectors of the education service. I think we would all have been happy to accept equal status. But Brian Jackson, who is only one of a host of others, has said that, "It's THE most important area of education. Everybody knows that most of a child's growth takes place between the ages of nought and five". 2 Now, no one would argue about the importance of a child's first five years to his later development but this does not constitute an argument for formal educational provision at this time. It can, for example, be claimed that the greatest rate of growth occurs between nought and six months. Is this a valid argument for formal educational arrangements at this time? I think we need to keep things in perspective and not make inflated claims for, or about, pre-school education.

If one attributes a high purpose to early childhood education, and particularly if this high purpose is connected with uplifting the less fortunate groups in society, then there will be pressures on pre-school education not only to fulfill this purpose but also to make it appear that this purpose is being fulfilled. In this context one can note that Head Start, which began by offering programmes of a familiar and traditional type, soon generated dozens of different types of pre-school programmes and many more research projects.

In New Zealand our "high purpose" has been the inclusion of children of Maori descent in pre-school education. Now, although the Hill Committee was implicitly invited to bring up recommendations for such children, it declined to do so. Perhaps this was a wise decision, but I suspect that it may have created some kind of vacuum - a feeling that "somebody should do something" in this area. If this analysis is

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2 Brian Jackson interviewed in the New Zealand Listener, 15 June, 1974, 10-11.

correct then perhaps there will be continuing pressure to develop special programmes for children who are thought to need such programmes. Dr Ritchie's research oriented pre-school at the Maori Studies Centre, University of Waikato, would seem to be an example of trying to fulfill a need not being attended to elsewhere. The "high purpose" motive for early childhood education is by no means new and its most striking result has been the widespread establishment of pre-school education throughout the world.

(b) The link between innovation and professionalism

Peter Dinniss has pointed out in his paper on professionalism two things that have a bearing on innovation; a trend towards a longer period of training and a growing clarity in the definition of what constitutes education for young children. He has suggested that as the aims and objectives of early childhood education have begun to be clarified it is possible for teachers to be educated for the particular functions identified for early childhood education.

Professionals, persons who have spent some time in being trained for a specific purpose, are quite likely to act as the agents of change in any situation where they are involved with non-professionals. The non-directive pre-school programmes discussed in the 1940s and put into effect in the 1950s offer, I think, a case in point. You may be interested to read a memorandum sent out in 1953 by the Principal of the Wellington Free Kindergarten Teachers' College, to local committees and mothers' clubs of kindergartens.

> "In recent discussions on equipment some time has been given to the children's use of kindergarten pianos and we feel that Committees would like to know our views.
> It has been unanimously agreed by the Kindergarten Council that the piano is as much a part of kindergarten equipment as any other piece of play material and that it is there for the children's use, whether they are participating in a music period or playing the piano themselves.
> The opportunity to experiment with sound and with touch is important to the child and is, further, an experience that not all children are able to have in their own homes.
> Staff supervision is, of course, given to this as it is to all other activities provided in the kindergarten". 3

One can wonder how much protest there had been from mothers about children being allowed to "bang on the piano". Similar protests used to occur in playcentres regarding such things as having water play always available.

Because the playcentres are a parent co-operative movement it is hard to disentangle professionals from parents. One can say, however, that playcentres have received support and direction from

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3 Wellington Free Kindergarten Association Incorporated, Memorandum, June 1953.

well educated women, and especially from those trained for occupations such as teaching. Such women have been available because, until recently, it was not socially acceptable for women with family responsibilities to go out to work. Playcentres do, however, tend to blur the professional/parent distinction. Peter Dinniss has pointed out in his paper a special professional role, that of parent educator, that has emerged in playcentres and I think that this particular role is partly a consequence of confining educated women to the home. I am going to make my job a little easier, however, by concentrating on programmes for children.

There is a danger that a professional group, such as a union of teachers, may consider that it is their special duty to institute reform and that this is not really the province of parents. The National Union of Teachers has, for example, recently produced a Report on the Provision of Pre-school Education in England and Wales. I shall be quoting from a discussion of this work in The Times Educational Supplement 30 November 1973. According to The Times Educational Supplement report the National Union of Teachers is urging schooling rather than playgroups and it wants all privately financed organizations, such as playgroups, phased out in favour of publicly financed nursery classes. "Only nursery schools and classes offer the combination of social, emotional and educational expertise to ensure the all-round development of young children", the report says. It is part of the professional role of the teacher to decide how much parents should be involved. The vice-chairman of the working party which produced the report is quoted as saying, "The parents need to understand the child's needs and how we are trying to fulfill them. The professional is the best judge of this".

The National Union of Teachers recommends a fully integrated nursery school curriculum concentrating on language development, pre-reading and pre-numeracy skills.

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RESISTANCE TO CHANGE

There are many different factors that could conceivably constitute a barrier to change in pre-school programmes but there are two which are probably of more importance than any others. The first is the belief in free, spontaneous, or non-directed play as a medium of education, and the second is the way in which those responsible for pre-school programmes see themselves.

(a) Free play

The single most important characteristic of pre-school programmes in New Zealand is their use of play.

If one examines the use of play in our pre-school centres it is clear that what is approved of is not play in all its forms but certain forms or types of play. Destructive and aggressive acts, no matter how playful, are not permitted (see Deardon in Peters 1967). 4 The provision of art materials and musical instruments indicates that forms of play related to the aesthetic activities of adults are approved of. Now, it may be suggested that these activities are provided not so much for their artistic purposes but so that a child may release his emotions in socially acceptable forms (the mental health strand of pre-school education), or because materials such as clay are basic or natural (the nature strand from Rousseau and Froebel), or because such materials train a child's senses (the Montessori strand), or because it enables a child to see spatial relationships (the Piaget strand). Without denying that such purposes

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4 R.F. Deardon, The concept of play, in R.S. Peters (ed.) The Concept of Education. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1967, 73-91.

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may be present the fact remains that art activities (for example) are presented in a form recognisable to adults as artistic. The paper is on an easel. The child is not permitted to paint other children or the walls although this would possibly fulfill the aims of catharsis, sense training, or seeing relationships quite as readily as painting on paper. Play in a pre-school includes exploring the Western cultural media of paint, paper and plastic materials in ways that are judged by adults as artistic. If Brian Sutton-Smith is right in his view (expressed during his lectures in New Zealand) that encouraging children to play helps them to become creative in the expressive arts then I think that this is partly because adults praise and encourage children when they explore art forms that adults understand. Anything too "way out", however, may not be recognised as valuable by an adult and the child may possibly be redirected to a more "constructive" activity.

Those in pre-school education in New Zealand are deeply committed to activities for children that are related to the artistic, creative and constructive activities of adults in a Western cultural tradition.

(b) The role of the director, supervisor, teacher

How do those responsible for pre-school programmes view themselves? My efforts to draw an industrial distinction between kindergarten directors (shades of management) and playcentre supervisors (shades of the factory floor) must, regretfully, be relinquished now that kindergarten directors have become teachers.

In view of our commitment to play I think that the following questions may be asked.

Can a person direct play?
Can a person supervise play?
Can a person teach play?

Can play be given another title so that it can be taught?
Are we beginning to think "free" play is outmoded?
How will the growing popularity of informal playgroups affect the established pre-school groups?
Will the latter try to make themselves different from playgroups?

Teachers are going to be neither more nor less likely to welcome change in pre-school programmes than are directors or supervisors. Perhaps, however, a teacher may be more responsive to changes of a certain kind such as the introduction of pre-reading and pre-number work, sequencing and structure of lesson materials, and assessment of a child's level of performance.

There may be a kind of tension between being a teacher and conducting a play programme, and this may result in changes in the programme or a change in title. "Basic activities" and "self-selective programmes," for example, are two paraphrases that are currently in use. It may well be that those in early childhood education will be strong enough to resist pressures towards formal teaching of any kind, but they may be able to do this only at the risk of remaining on a lower status and in a slightly detached section of the teaching profession. One hopes, however, that pre-school people will take responsibility for their own innovation and not let innovation be thrust upon them.

THE CRYSTAL BALL

If the pre-school movements continue to believe most strongly in non-directed play, then this must be taken into account in any planned innovation. (Maybe non-directed play is what three- and four-year-olds believe in most strongly too). This means that innovation would be

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most likely to occur through

(a) the invention of new forms of equipment, or

(b) through adult participation in the play activities of children.

Of the two, the first is the easier to carry out. The second requires highly trained persons if they are to do more than engage in parallel play. But, as has been suggested above, increasing the length and depth of training may result in persons who aspire to do things other than direct or supervise or participate. They may wish to "teach" in a manner which is familiar to those outside pre-school circles as "teaching".

If specialised programmes or services are thought to be necessary at the pre-school level (for example, music and dance) then itinerant teachers could serve a number of centres without destroying the autonomy of pre-school groups and their community involvement. Activities for a mother and her child to do together should prove acceptable to pre-school groups in New Zealand. Small group "teaching" may also be acceptable if the stress were on co-operative problem solving (Graves and Graves 1973).5

Unfortunately, we have very little information about New Zealand children and their development that would help a pre-school teacher to judge, more accurately, the progress of the children in her care. If we did have such information, and this depends upon how much research is done in this field, we could perhaps work out ways of assessing children, preferably in an informal way, so that the occasional child who needs help could be identified, and so that we could measure, with greater precision, the effects of pre-school education on the

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5 Nancy B. Graves and Theodore D. Graves. 'Inclusive vs exclusive behaviour in New Zealand school settings, Polynesian-Pakeha contrasts in adaptation . Mimeo. Anthropology Department. University of Auckland, 1973.

child. If there are to be innovations in early childhood education it seems especially important to be able to gauge their consequences.

In this paper I have assumed that change is inevitable in the area of early childhood education as a whole. This does not necessarily mean that pre-school programmes will change but it increases the likelihood of this happening. I hope I have been able to provide a basis for discussion today so that we can examine what we see as the directions of change and their possible consequences.